

"But what'll I do for a face?" he wailed in a whisper.

"Use mine. I can always get another."

"It won't work. People aren't blind. They'll smell a rat."

A sly wink worked its way out from beneath her wrinkles as she handed him a black nylon stocking with mouth-and-eye-holes cut out. "Not if you wear this."

"Well, I'm over a barrel," he admitted. "Besides," he thought, "you can't change faces." So with the checkout line getting longer and longer, with everyone screaming and griping and threatening, he and the old lady went into a storage room and, minutes later, left with black nylons over their heads -- she to her ugly son, he to a crippled lawyer who, he'd heard, for a good leg and a blood-oath of secrecy, would accomplish miracles.

B.P. 1050

As a boy, Jimmy planned to be a baseball star. The springy thwap of ball on bat, the feel of well-oiled leather, the crowd roaring from the bleachers full of popcorn-hotdogs-beer, the slides, the hotbox, 3-and-2, inside-the-park-homeruns -- that was what got him.

...

But there he was at 40 -- Body Piler 1050. All day corpses came rolling in and Jimmy -- considering size, shape, weight, and color -- fitted them into his part of the Mountain.

His Supervisors called it "a challenging art", "social service", "a credit to his country," which Jimmy bought at first, then quit buying.

...

Here came a Chinese merchant -- short, fat, fiftyish, one slanted eye still looking for the well-paid whore who knifed him. Then a drowned Jewish boy, who'd never be a doctor, have his own tv show, or marry a blonde shikse. Next an African -- long, rangy, looking like hard black rubber except where the tires passed over him.

"Death's integrated," Jimmy like to say.

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At first dead women made him sick. Then sad. Then he started fucking the good lookers. Then he stopped.

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Body piling being hot and smelly, Jimmy wore a nose-clip and worked naked. He'd come to work, fold his clothes neatly on his office chair, and wade in. It was against the rules, but Supervisors shunned the Mountain, and no one else cared.

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Halfway up the Mountain with a little old grandmother on his back and his nose-clip forgotten on his chair, Jimmy's heart just quit. It's best he didn't see how perfectly he and cargo fit in, without the least arranging.

...

When bodies started piling up at Site 1050, Jimmy was found missing. No trace except his clothes, nose-clip on top, piled neatly on his office chair. Clearly a spiteful trick. So Jimmy was sacked on the spot. And Jack, just turned 18, became the new B.P. 1050. And Sue became an abandoned wife with no pension.

"Life's like that," Jimmy would have said.

AN UNKNOWN ANIMAL

with the face of a proboscis monkey and the body of a sea-cucumber is found under a bed. A man is just wondering if there's any money or danger in it, when his doorbell breaks into song.

The man jumps as if caught with a dirty book. He tiptoes to the door and cracks it, keeping the chain-latch on. Information squeezes through:

(1) A girl has lost her virginity. (2) It has the face of a proboscis monkey, the body of a sea-cucumber, and answers to a name which decency prevents being uttered. (3) A reward is offered -- an unspecified sum of money or goods, plus the knowledge of virtue. (4) The parents are frantic. (The father speaks too fast. The mother keeps tugging her left earring.) If the creature is not found soon, their daughter threatens to become a tattooed lady and fuck for the fun of it.

DEAR DIARY

I've been retained to deliver the commencement address at a small religious college. Their sect believes that the proper functioning of the universe depends on the ratio of sheep's legs to sheep remaining constant. This is why, in certain circles, the sight of a 5-legged sheep is said to cause ringworm and the birth of hairy babies. It also explains the origin of the phrase "more trouble than a peg-legged sheep."

I've had no prior connection with the college or with shepherdry, and haven't been to any church since I learned about the Tooth Fairy, so I can only assume some school official liked my face, or mistook me for someone else, or overheard me telling my joke about three soldiers who pass a sheep trapped, rear forward, in a